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"Stairway to Seven"

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And so it was, sitting in chemistry class, looking at Pascal's Triangle on the overhead, that I really understood what humanistic mathematics is. It is finding the mathematics that is everywhere.

I have been the production manager of the HMNJ since March 1998 (Issue #17). I majored in chemistry and am now off to University of California, Santa Cruz to pursue a graduate degree in science writing. I leave the HMNJ in wonderful hands. Expect to see issues in your mailbox more frequently; Stephanie, Fess, Mary and Kathe are a great team, and I wish them well.

0	singlet (1)	1
1	doublet (2)	1 : 1
2	triplet (3)	1 : 2 : 1
3	quartet (4)	1 : 3 : 3 : 1
4	quintet (5)	1 : 4 : 6 : 4 : 1
5	sextet (6)	1 : 5 : 10 : 10 : 5 : 1
6	septet (7)	1 : 6 : 15 : 20 : 15 : 6 : 1

Figure 2
Pascal's Triangle.

"Stairway to Seven"

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May be sung to the tune of the 7 verse song "Stairway to Heaven" by Jimmy Page and Robert Plant.

There's a student who's sure if she rolls two fair dice,
The most likely sum is seven.

On the seventh day she knows many stores will be
closed

'Cause lots of folks call it the day of rest.

Ooh, ooh, she's inquiring: "Where is there a
seven?"

Well there's a seven on the wall, but she wants to be
sure

'Cause you know uncrossed sevens can look like ones.
From seven notes in a scale, there's a songbird who
sings—

It's the first sour note in the harmonic series.

Ooh, it's quite a number. Ooh, seven wonders.

There's a feeling I get from the seven continents
And shuffles needed to mix the cards:

Snow White's dwarves all could be a water polo
team—

It's the limit of short-term mem'ry.

Ooh, it's quite a number. Ooh, telephone number.

It's the steps in ballet's art, it's the Big Dipper stars,
And it's how many times you can fold paper.
First polygon to elude the classical tools

And it's how many patterns for borders.

If a track meet takes a long time, don't be alarmed
now—

It's just what's called a heptathlon.

Can you remember when the 7th month was Septem-
ber?

Then Caesar added August and July! And it makes
me wonder...

Seven verses make this song maybe too long,

The piper fights for airplay!

First whole number whose reciprocal does use
Its maximum block of digits.

As we wind on down the road, with 7 chakras I am
told,

And 7 colors of the rainbow make white light when
they all show.

If you listen to this rhyme of this odd Mersenne prime,
May it make you want to find each number's special
shine...

And she's buying a stairway to seventh heaven!

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